

Desert Sun

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Page: B4

Our voice
Editorial Board
Staff
The Desert Sun

City Council needs to let Jerry Hanson go

Desert Hot Springs is remiss in keeping manager on dole

Some members of the Desert Hot Springs City Council might as well drape a sandwich board sign around their necks with the slogan, "Out to lunch."

Aw, what the heck. Skip the sign: the astute citizenry knows the score. What other possible explanation could there be for councilmembers continuing to ignore City Manager Jerry Hanson's conflicts of interests?

Out to lunch? Wearing blinders? Gone fishin'? Take your pick. The DHS City Council is guilty of it all.

In a same-song-different-verse scenario, the City Council plans to discuss on Sept. 16 a new conflict-of interest allegation levied against Hanson. It's the second such allegation since his February appointment.

The City Council conducted, and on Aug. 5 terminated, its investigation of a conflict-of-interest claim involving the city hiring Hanson's son's employer to install security equipment on city property. The City Council made a bad call.

At issue was an \$8,600 contract the City Council entered into with Tyco Fire and Security, where Hanson's son, Justin, works to install security cameras.

The council unanimously approved the contract Feb. 4. Councilmembers say they had no knowledge of the father-son relationship at the time. It was the first and only time Tyco has submitted a bid to the city, according to the city clerk.

Even though Hanson had not yet been appointed as manager, he interviewed for the position on Feb. 1. Knowing full well he could be the city's next manager, Hanson should have disclosed the relationship, especially in light of the fact that he had been warned of this type of thing in the past.

The new allegation involves Hanson preparing a Dec. 14 engineering report for a resident and general contractor while Hanson served as the city's public works director.

A state-licensed civil engineer, Hanson prepared a "fire burnout and structural damage" report for Omega Builders, a general building contractor based in Moreno Valley, and the owner of a building on Flora Avenue.

The report was prepared by H-A and E Architects and Engineers, signed by Hanson and dated Dec. 14, 2002.

The city accepted his recommendations within the report.

The address listed for the company is the same as Hanson's home address.

The city's conflict-of-interest code states that: "No councilmember or other official of employee shall engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interests when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of his or her official duties or would tend to impair independence or judgment or action in the performance of official